

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



STUDENT VETERAN SERVICES

I transitioned out of the Army in 2013. After 4 ½ years and 3 combat deployments I was ready to enjoy the freedoms of being a civilian again. Pursuing higher education was never really an option for me and I was initially under the impression that there were too many people with college degrees out there and not enough underwater welders. So a few months after my discharge date I was enrolled in a commercial diving school in Seattle and worked as a commercial diver for 3 years. My body was starting to feel the effects of my new career, so I thought it best to go back to school and enrolled into a community college on Long Island NY.

Transitioning to school was more difficult for me since it was a completely different environment than anything I had experienced in the military or while working as a diver. Despite that, I managed to get good grades and was accepted to Columbia University in NYC. During this time, I was seeking medical care from the VA back on Long Island even though I was now in the city. I was too busy with school to get it straightened out and just put it off. Soon after, I was first introduced to VITAL through a friend of mine who was working in the program. He helped me transfer my medical care out to Manhattan and made the entire process seamless. I was so impressed by VITAL and how they helped veterans connect with numerous resources and opportunities that I joined them soon after.

On January 15th 2020, Columbia held their incoming student veteran orientation at the faculty house on campus. VITAL was there to enroll students into the Manhattan VA and engage students who had questions about transitioning into an academic environment. I very much recommend every veteran going to school to enroll with VITAL. Attending classes and dealing with the everyday concerns of day-to-day life is enough. VITAL is there to help with everything else. Whether it be tutors, dealing with holdups at the VA, filing claims and so much more. There are so many opportunities and resources out there for veterans to access, the problem is that many veterans don't know what is available to them, but VITAL is there to bridge that gap.

For more information regarding VITAL or to learn how to connect to other student veterans, please contact Dr. Yvette Branson at Yvette.Branson@va.gov

